

FEDERAL MINISTER OF DEFENSE
GÜNTHER PLATTER

**Welcome Address
to the 'Blue Helmet Forum Austria' 2005**

Austria can look back to a long-standing tradition of international operations. The Austrian Armed Forces take pride in contributing with their military units and staffs to securing peace in other countries. Our soldiers have gained well-deserved recognition within the framework of the UN, the ESDP as well as the NATO-PfP program.

Securing peace effectively calls for a comprehensive strategy that facilitates the use of the synergetic effects of diplomatic, economic, civil and military means. Each of these areas is a contributor of vital importance in this context.

Worldwide, numerous conferences and seminars are dealing with the problems of peace operations. In order to come up with the necessary analyses and intensify the necessary dialogue among experts we will still have to concentrate more on the practical aspects of peace operations.

In this sense, the Austrian Blue Helmet Association has taken the initiative by establishing the Blue Helmet Forum Austria, a platform for exchanging experience on

a highly qualified level. The Blue Helmet Forum Austria is designed to bring military peacekeeping experts together with leading personalities from other fields and, in doing so, helps to establish a network.

Participation with military forces in securing peace also requires broad public acceptance. Events like this of the Blue Helmet Forum Austria should help create public interest in dealing with aspects of international military operations.

I wish the Blue Helmet Forum Austria great success and all international and national participants interesting discussions and a very pleasant stay in Reichenau.

VIENNA, 23 May 2005